

Community Forum
Thursday, March 1, 2012
7:00 p.m., High School South Auditorium

Budget Overview Presentation

Dr. Robert O'Donnell began the Community forum at approximately 7:00 p.m. He let all know that he appreciated their attendance and explained he would begin with an overview presentation of the budget.

Dr. O'Donnell noted what is transpiring, will review recommendations moving forward, will work with staff for efficiencies, explained how it is difficult to engage in a process with parts not shown, has already shared his thinking with the board, students, and staff. We live in a democracy and that is what we are doing this week. Dr. O'Donnell recognized board members attending the session, noted Jeff Ammerman, Jason Perrin, and Mike Hardy and what they do and have been working on during this process, especially Mr. Ammerman.

The board needs to be in a comfortable spot and also know what people think. Dr. O'Donnell reviewed the PowerPoint presentation that was done at the February 27, 2012 board meeting and elaborated on the key options of the proposal:

- Increase of 2.7% or 1 mill for a total proposed tax rate of 37.85 mills
- Would mean an additional \$70 to Median Homeowner for 2012-2013
- Act 1 Index of 1.7%
- District using approximately \$783,000 worth of exceptions for pension expenses to arrive at a 2.7%
- Total Revenue to equal \$116,752,202
- The proposed budget requires a net reduction in expenses of \$1,282,419 over the preliminary budget
- Attrition savings of \$600,000*
- Unemployment Compensation Costs \$100,000 lower than current year*
- Freeze allocations for everything but supplies, equipment, debt service and personnel at 2011-2012 level
- Reduce supply and equipment expenses by \$515,000 compared to 2011-2012 level
- Dr. O'Donnell explained options with attrition
- Mr. Ammerman explained the Unemployment Compensation
- Dr. O'Donnell noted the equipment reduction would be mostly in the area of technology.

Not proposed at this time:

- Staff Furloughs
- Participation Fees for student extra/co-curricular activities
- Decreased contributions of \$1 million to Capital Reserve Fund
- Change pre-funding strategy for Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS)

Feedback Needed for:

- Critical feedback for current proposal
- Suggestions to improve the current proposal
- Suggestions regarding budget practices for 2012-2014 and beyond

Attendees were taken to small group session.

The following data is verbatim from what was collected during the small group discussion on Thursday, March 1. The feedback was recorded by a group member during their conversations.

Each group was asked to review the following three questions/statements:

1. What is the critical feedback of the current proposal (positive/negative)?
2. What strategies/suggestions do you have for the current proposal?
3. What budget-related strategies/suggestions do you have for 2013-14 and beyond?

Critical Feedback

- Commendable that only one exception is being used (Not Special Education)
- Commendable regarding no furloughing
- Many assumptions (contracts not signed, retirements unknown, etc.)
- Why mention the NOT's

- Questions regarding the K-8 coaches
- Technology
 - Are we looking at Notebooks? How is it used at younger grades?
 - What will a \$400,000 reduction look like?
 - What are they looking at in terms of the future of technology?
- How can you develop a budget without personnel costs included? and contracts?
- How will you deal with retroactive pay with the 3 unions?
- Felt relieved
- Appreciated communication and proactive approach
- Excited about the instructional coaches
- Why does the school district continue to raise taxes? Start with a 0% tax base; consider gas prices, inflation, frozen or decreased salaries/wages
- Have we considered the risks/benefits of attritional reductions? (over a longer period of time)
- It is a good proposal
- Would it help for people to see what would be at-risk with a 0% tax increase?
- Why would we want to risk providing our students with less than optimum technological devices?
- Employees need to contribute more to their health benefits.
- Be more creative with online classes and energy efficiency.
- Don't underestimate the power of the "face to face" component of teaching/learning in classrooms.
- The lack of rigor/data with regard to how children learn best (research-based strategies)
- Look at athletics to see if we are offering more than we can afford to offer? Review athletic opportunities, transportation, number of coaches, and don't re-institute the lost competitions.

Suggestions for current proposal

- Wish instructional coaches could also work with paras and guest teachers
- Will instructional coach positions be similar to previous curriculum positions? We hope not.
- How many teachers (average) retire/resign each year?
- Look into incentives to promote higher retirement numbers
- Prepare for PSERS long-term so as not to impact educational programs

Suggestions for 2013-14 and Beyond

- Narrow down programs in technology
- E-textbooks
- Reduce release time for teacher training
- Commendable to use instructional coaches and expanding to grade 6
- Is all the technology training necessary?
- We need to maintain focus on core content.
- Please do not consider participation/activity fee
- Use of alumni funds/create funds to help for participation fees? Or other uses?

All Responses Posted

Dr. O'Donnell brought everyone back to the auditorium to review responses from the various groups. The responses were posted on the walls for people to read.

Comments at Open Microphone

- Bobby Misher - lively conversation, question he brought forward was regarding more online learning for students; reducing costs by allowing more students to take online classes. Use more strategy in regard to course selection and saving district money.

Closing

The district needs to do the final budget approved by June 30, 2012 and we are working towards that goal and started the process sooner this year. It may change at some point, but this was our best proposal and what we felt were the next best steps moving forward for the whole district with keeping focused on the core learning.